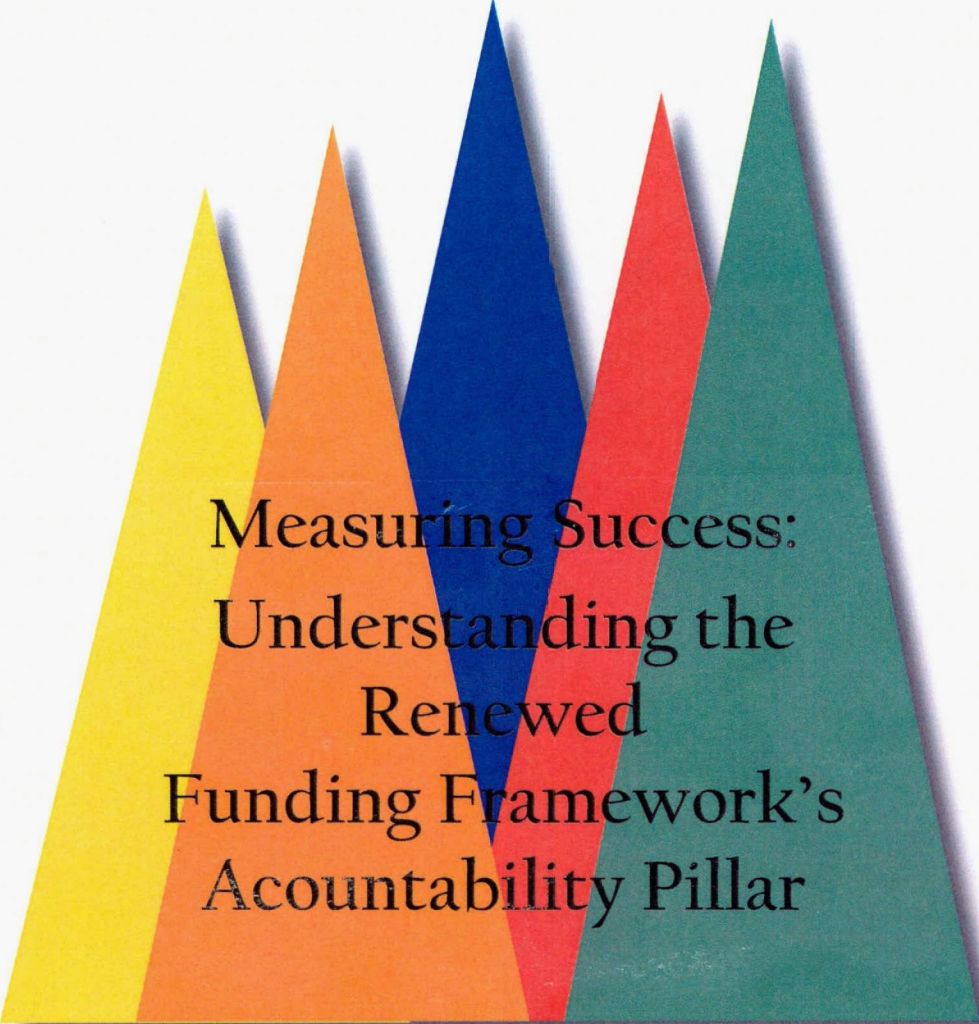


ACCOUNTABILITY PILLAR



Measuring Success:
Understanding the
Renewed
Funding Framework's
Accountability Pillar

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Measuring Success: Understanding the Renewed Funding Framework's Accountability Pillar



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What is the Accountability Pillar?

In September 2004, Alberta Education introduced an innovative funding framework that gives school boards the flexibility and freedom to meet the unique needs of their students and communities. The Renewed Funding Framework (RFF) provides core funding based on student enrolment and additional funding to meet the needs of specific student groups and certain geographic or population challenges. It is based on three pillars – Funding, Flexibility, and Accountability.

While the new framework gives boards more freedom in how they use their funding, it also increases the need to demonstrate measurable results. The Accountability Pillar was created to give school boards a consistent way to measure their success and assess progress using a broad spectrum of measures. It is based on a set of common measures that assess important outcomes in specific categories, giving the public a clear picture of how well learning goals are being achieved; and it also helps identify areas that need improvement and set priorities for the future.

Why does it matter?

The Accountability Pillar helps school jurisdictions determine how well they are meeting their own learning goals, while also ensuring all jurisdictions are measuring success in the same way. While most school boards have always tracked their own progress, what they measured, when and how could vary widely. With the Accountability Pillar, all jurisdictions measure the same factors in the same way at the same time, creating timely, accurate, consistent data that is publicly evaluated and reported.

The Accountability Pillar allows jurisdictions to gauge their own progress and compare successes.

It makes it easier to determine if challenges are local or province-wide. It also helps assess successes and identify opportunities for improvement, to provide students with the best possible learning experience.

The reporting of the results in the jurisdiction's Annual Education Results Report ensures that the entire education system is more open and accountable to all Albertans. At the same time, it invites students, parents and teachers to provide input and feedback, which strengthens their sense of ownership in the system and its successes.

How does it work?

The Accountability Pillar collects data on student achievement from Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams, and information on perceived quality of education using survey data from students, parents, and teachers (conducted between January and March annually). It also uses additional student outcome data such as drop out rates, high school completion rates and the number of students eligible to receive Rutherford Scholarships.

Accountability Pillar measures are combined into seven categories, which track a jurisdiction's progress towards reaching their education goals. Each category consists of measures evaluated both individually and as a group, including evaluations on achievement (comparison against fixed provincial standards) and improvement (comparison against previous performance).

An overall assessment is made by combining both the achievement and improvement results.

Taken together, this information demonstrates how well each district is doing in realizing expected outcomes and which areas require additional work. It also allows school boards to assess their achievement compared to provincial standards, and to see how they have improved their previous performance.

Starting May 2006, the data is provided as a complete report that jurisdictions can use to develop their Three-Year Education Plans. Alberta Education also releases an updated report each October, with the most recent Diploma Exam results and Provincial Achievement Test results. This report is suitable for inclusion in the Annual Education Results Report that jurisdictions share with their community.

What are the categories and measures?

The seven categories that are used as part of the Accountability Pillar were chosen to support the goals and outcomes identified in Alberta Education's Business Plan. The Accountability Pillar measures organized by the categories are presented below.

| Category | How Success is Measured |
|---|---|
| Safe and caring schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One survey measure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Percentage of teacher, parent and student agreement that: students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others and are treated fairly at school. |
| Student learning opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual drop-out rate of students aged 14-18 • High school completion rate • Two survey measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Percentage of teachers, parents and students satisfied with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies, including fine arts, career, technology, and health and physical education. » Percentage of teachers, parents and students satisfied with the overall quality of basic education. |
| Student learning achievement (Grades K to 9) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial achievement tests acceptable standard • Provincial achievement tests standard of excellence |
| Student learning achievement (Grades 10 to 12) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma exams acceptable standard • Diploma exams standard of excellence • Rutherford Scholarship eligibility • Diploma exam participation rate |
| Preparing for lifelong learning, world of work, and citizenship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school to post-secondary transition rate • Two survey measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Percentage of teachers and parents who agree that students are taught the attitudes and behaviors that will make them successful at work when they finish school. » Percentage of teachers, parents and students who are satisfied that students model the characteristics of active citizenship. |
| Parental involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One survey measure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Percentage of teachers and parents satisfied with parental involvement in decision about their child's education. |
| Continuous improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One survey measure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Percentage of teachers and parents indicating that their school and schools in their jurisdiction have improved or stayed the same in the last three years. |

What information is in the report?

Each May, a report from Alberta Education will include all of the most recent data, including the current jurisdiction survey results, objective measures of student outcomes and the previous year's Provincial Achievement Test and Diploma Exam results. For each of those measures, the report will include:

- Current year result
- Previous year result
- Previous three-year average of results
- Provincial current result
- Provincial previous three-year average
- Five-year trend data (if available)

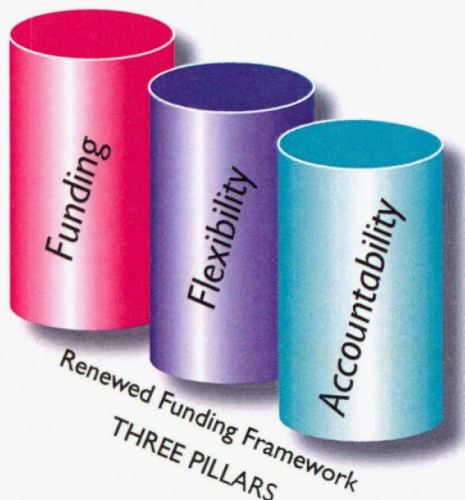
The report will also include an evaluation of each measure on **achievement**, which compares your results to a consistent standard and **improvement**, which measures your current performance against your previous results.

What will jurisdictions do with this information?

The data and initial evaluation that jurisdictions received in May 2006 will help guide the development of their 3-Year Education Plans and determine priorities for improving learning outcomes. Just as importantly, it provides a means of sharing results with their communities, ensuring the system is open and accountable to all Albertans.

Jurisdictions will use their evaluations to identify areas requiring improvement. Action plans, including timelines and targets, are then developed to address these areas and included in their 3-Year Education Plan and shared with the community. Field Services and the jurisdiction will discuss the plans and results during the regularly scheduled AERR review sessions. If improvement does not occur over time enhanced departmental assistance may be considered.

Alberta Education is available to assist jurisdictions in making effective use of their data and evaluation at their request.



Who developed the Accountability Pillar process?

The Accountability Pillar Design and Implementation Advisory Steering Committee was formed to advise the Minister of Education on the design and implementation of the Accountability Pillar. The province's primary education stakeholder organizations are all members of this group.

The committee's work is based on a number of operating principles, with five primary areas of focus:

1. A transparent process
2. Focus on achievement
3. Holistic approach to evaluation
4. An ongoing, collaborative process
5. All jurisdictions can succeed.

What resources are available to help?

Alberta Education offers a wide variety of tools and resources to assist jurisdictions in developing and implementing action plans for improvement. Most of these supports are available upon request, and jurisdictions can request this support at any time. Examples include:

- Online resources at Alberta Education's website
- Toolkit for Supporting Continuous Improvement in Schools
- Regular contact with and support from Alberta Education staff.

In situations where enhanced department assistance is indicated, jurisdictions work with Alberta Education to access additional resources, including:

- Involvement of external experts or specialists
- Use of contractors or post-secondary institutions
- Targeted involvement from Alberta Education staff.



Consultation

Alberta Education will continue to consult with education stakeholders during the implementation of the Accountability Pillar. For example, Alberta Education hosted 15 Zone workshops in January 2006 and one-on-one meetings with jurisdictions to outline the Accountability Pillar in more detail, and discuss an initial draft of evaluated Accountability Pillar results, followed by regional meetings in Spring 2007 to update jurisdictions on Accountability Pillar developments.

Alberta Education staff meet with superintendents annually to review three-year education plans and Annual Education Results Reports. These sessions include an opportunity for jurisdictions and Alberta Education to discuss the Accountability Pillar.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about the Accountability Pillar and how it works, please contact us directly at the address below. At the same time, we value your input, and welcome your suggestions on how we can better serve the needs of your jurisdiction. Please call us or email:

Performance, Measurement and Reporting

Sharon Campbell, Executive Director,
Accountability & Reporting
(780) 427-8217

Field Services

Dianna Millard, Executive Director
(Acting), Learning Supports
(780) 427-5378

Zone Directors

- Terry Wendel, Director, Zone 1
(780) 427-5394
- Doug McDavid, Director, Zone 2/3
(780) 427-9296
- Loraine Steele, Director, Zone 4
(780) 427-5381
- David Woloshyn, Director, Zone 5
(780) 415-9312
- Doug Coffin, Director, Zone 6
(780) 427-5412

French Language Services

- Paul Lamoureux, Director (Acting)
(780) 422-7793



Acknowledgements

A number of key education stakeholders participated in the Accountability Pillar development process:

Review Committee on Outcomes (RCO)

- Alberta Home & School Councils' Association (AHSCA)
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
- Alberta Chamber of Commerce
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- Member at Large
- Woodhaven Junior High School Council (Parent at Large)
- Olds College (Public Colleges and Technical Institutions of Alberta)
- University of Alberta (Universities Coordination Council)

Funding Framework Review Committee (FFRC)

- ASBOA, CASS, AHSCA, FCSFA, ASBA

School Board Planning Guide Advisory Group

- Alberta Home & School Councils' Association
- Alberta School Boards Association
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)

Accountability Pillar Design and Implementation Advisory Sub-Committee (APDIASC)

- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- Alberta Home & School Councils' Association (AHSCA)
- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta (FCSFA)
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)

Jurisdiction Survey Advisory Group (JSAG)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • Battle River | • Calgary Public |
| • Chinook's Edge | • Christ the Redeemer |
| • Clearview | • Edmonton Catholic |
| • Edmonton Public | • Elk Island Public |
| • Medicine Hat Catholic | • Northland |
| • Red Deer Catholic | • St. Albert Protestant |
| • South Alberta Catholic Separate Francophone Authority | |

For more information, please visit the Accountability Pillar website, www.education.gov.ab.ca/accountability/

